

NZHA President's Report, 14 October 2016

#HistoryMatters #NZHA2017

Ngā mihi ki a koutou, arā, ki a tātou.

I begin my first President's report with thanks to the many people who keep our association going – our members, supporters, council and executive. In the first few months, the former executive, particularly past-President Katie Pickles and Secretary Joanna Cobley, answered numerous and sometimes random questions. They forwarded mail, statements, inquiries, passwords, and boxes of association archives. Raewyn Dalziel helped to reorganise our membership files. Hirini Kaa got the electronic newsletter up and running, and we have enjoyed contributions to it from Raewyn, Geoff Watson, and the University of Auckland History Society. Felicity Barnes reviewed the NZHA prizes. We have benefitted from Jennifer Ashton's appointment as NZHA Executive Assistant, a position created and resourced as a result of a proposal put to the 2015 AGM. Post-graduate students Tessa Morgan and Ryan Anderson have been great contributors to our conference sub-committee.

I am very grateful for the local team effort that attends to the daily business of NZHA, and also to those beyond Auckland who contribute to the tasks that keep us engaged in national conversations: the members who wrote submissions on proposed disposals at Archives New Zealand, or the National Library's strategic directions; who lobby for the importance of New Zealand history; and who travelled to Auckland to participate in the planning day we held in June. Tēnā koutou kātoa.

We reported on the planning day in our August newsletter, and a Word version of that report is also available to members via the website. Much of today's business derives from that meeting, including the motions on membership and prizes and the discussion set for General Business. For me, the planning day was a highlight, a very useful way of thinking about what issues might matter to the association this year and next, which in turn has helped shape the executive committee's programme of work. It was a spur to think about the future of both the NZHA and New Zealand history more generally, and it gave me cause to think about being NZHA President, about what I could bring to the position, and how I want my Presidency to be characterised. So, I hope, as a bare minimum, I have brought my organisational skills to bear on the role, and will continue to do so through to the end of next year. I hope I have been mindful that our members belong to many different groups and organisations, and not just the universities. In that spirit, I hope that whanaungatanga, inclusivity, and communication will feature this year and next.

Advocacy and Promotion

Alongside the association's daily affairs, we have also dealt with a range of issues in the public domain.

Department of Internal Affairs: Archives and National Library

The year began with several Archives New Zealand notifications to dispose of certain government records arriving in quick succession. We registered our ongoing concerns about this process in a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Peter Dunne, effectively continuing the campaign begun by the previous Canterbury-based executive. Our colleagues at Victoria

University of Wellington made submissions on the Veterans' Affairs records, and here at Auckland we submitted on the records of Te Puni Kōkiri. Possibly individual members or groups also made submissions, but we do not have a central record of that.

There is yet more work to be done on the National Archives front. At the end of last month, Archives New Zealand released a discussion document on its future role, looking forward to 2057. Stakeholders have until 4 November to provide feedback. You can find the document online at: www.govt.nz/Archives2057. I do hope we can generate enough interest and support to produce an NZHA response.

I note that Cybele Locke attended a meeting with the Chief Archivist, Marilyn Little, and Kate Hodgetts about the document, and is now an ongoing contact for any matters that arise. I am very grateful for Cybele's support, on both this issue and the National Library's strategic directions discussion document, for which Cybele led an NZHA response in August. A few days ago the Chief Librarian issued a report summarising all the submissions received, which you can retrieve online here: <http://natlib.govt.nz/about-us/strategy-and-policy/consultation-on-draft-strategic-directions-to-2030>.

New Zealand Wars Petition

In April we made a submission to the Māori Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the New Zealand Wars petition, a useful opportunity for NZHA to make a statement about the teaching of New Zealand history.

Royal Society of New Zealand

We have continued to be an active constituent organisation (CO) of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Margaret Tennant was elected to the Council earlier this year; Charlotte Macdonald represented NZHA at the COs' forum in May, and Cybele Locke will represent us at the next forum in November. One of the outcomes from the May forum is an alliance with New Zealand surveyors and archaeologists over the issue of government records – specifically, the care, digitisation, and accessibility of old survey records. While we have kept up with the activities associated with our constituent organisation status, largely by relying on the goodwill of our Wellington members, we have yet to directly address the question that Katie asked last year about whether 'we need a ring fenced position on the executive for RSNZ business', because being a CO does create quite a bit of work.

Furthermore, there are clearly plenty of opportunities to promote historical study, teaching and research, in keeping with our constitution. However, I am not convinced that we have the energy, resources and availability among our members to respond to all the issues and challenges that are brought before us. Deadlines are often unhelpfully tight, and we are all already busy in an organisation that relies on dedicated voluntary effort. I am not sure what the solutions are, especially as the problems are not new, but it is something on which I expect to continue thinking and working.

Membership

As at 13 October 2016, financial membership stands at 117: twenty-four memberships expire at the end of 2017; and the balance of 93 memberships will expire at the end of this year. Thirty-eight financial members are new this year. Fifty-eight members who were financial in 2015 did not renew for 2016. The overall decline follows a pattern of non-renewals in previous years. We have no information on why people have not renewed, except for one former member who said the association is not relevant to his new job. Some of the other non-renewals are possibly explained by former students, people who have left New Zealand, and a few deceased members.

As Katie Pickles noted in her 2015 report, declining membership is a feature of most professional associations in the age of digital belonging and association. Therefore, we need not be disappointed with the overall decline in NZHA membership in recent years. As Katie further pointed out, decreased membership coupled with a shift to electronic communication with members has led to useful savings, such as on postage. However, the funds raised from membership are an important contribution to the day-to-day administration of NZHA, our advocacy work, and the biennial prizes we offer, so financial membership remains important to us. On the other hand, we should also take care to ensure our members gain some benefit from their membership. This has been a focus for the Executive and Council this year, following on from the June planning meeting.

Communications

Hopefully the activity that Hirini has lead around the website and the electronic newsletter has been obvious to members. We have had some great feedback on the newsletter, but we are yet to determine the right frequency – often enough to be useful, but not so often as to be annoying. We also need to do more work on the website. These developments have happened in association with work Jennifer has done on membership, partly so that we can work as efficiently as possible, but also to understand our members as more than a tally of those who have paid their subscriptions.

Conference 2017

We are looking forward to hosting the biennial conference of the Association at the end of November next year. The confirmed dates are: Wednesday 29 to Thursday 30 November, and Friday 1 December. The conference will be preceded on 28 November by a Graduates' Day, and an evening event at Auckland Museum – details of both to be confirmed in due course.

Aroha Harris
Friday 14 October 2016

NZHA Membership

Motion:

That NZHA implement a student/unwaged membership rate of \$15.

NZHA's student category of membership is well-established, but there is really no distinction between student members and other individual members. Expanding the student category to include unwaged, coupled with a rate of \$15, goes some way towards acknowledging that we may have members who have no or low incomes.

NZHA Constitution

Motions:

That in the first line of Clause 4.1, 'fixed' is changed to 'proposed'.

The revised clause would therefore read: The subscriptions for individual and institutional members shall be proposed by the Council of the Association in accordance with the procedures laid down in clause 7.2

'Proposed' is more fitting than 'fixed', because clause 7.2 requires such changes to be made at an AGM or SGM.

That 'constitutional or affiliated' be deleted from clause 10.2.

This motion is proposed largely for reasons of consistency, so that the constitution's language concerning members is consistent throughout. It does not refer to constitutional or affiliated members elsewhere, or give a definition of those categories (although presumably a constitutional member is an ordinary financial member).

That 'of receiving them' be inserted after 'within ninety days' in Clause 11.3

The revised clause would therefore read: Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be forwarded to the Secretary, who within ninety days *of receiving them* shall submit them to members...

This revision provides clarity between the ninety days referred to in clause 11.1, and the thirty days in clauses 11.1 and 11.2.

That the Executive be tasked with proposing amendments to the constitution for matters of an editorial nature only, those proposals to be circulated among Council members for confirmation. Editorial matters are to include: correction of typographical, grammatical and spelling errors; clear and logical numbering of the clauses and sub-clauses; correction of cross-references between clauses; and formatting.

The editorial items picked up so far are noted in the attached version of the constitution. More substantial proposals for change must be brought to an AGM for approval.

